



Betsaida  
Alcantara/DC/USEPA/US  
06/17/2009 12:12 PM

To Richard Mylott/R8/USEPA/US@EPA, Carol  
Campbell/R8/USEPA/US@EPA  
cc  
bcc



1238080 - R8 SDMS

Subject fyi: AP: EPA declares health emergency in Montana town

EPA declares health emergency in Montana town

By MATTHEW DALY – 34 minutes ago

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency for the first time has declared a public health emergency in a contaminated community, targeting a Montana town Wednesday for immediate federal attention.

The declaration by EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson involving Libby, Mont., will not result in an evacuation, but will require an extensive cleanup and better health protections for residents with asbestos-related illnesses.

Jackson called Libby a "tragic public health situation" that has not received the recognition it deserves from the federal government for far too long.

Asbestos contamination from a now-closed vermiculite mine near Libby has been cited in the deaths of more than 200 people and illnesses of thousands more.

Jackson said the public health emergency declaration was the first time the EPA has made such a determination under authority of the 1980 Superfund law that requires the clean up of contaminated sites.

Investigations performed by the federal Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry have found that occurrences of asbestosis, a lung condition, near Libby are staggeringly higher than the national average for the period from 1979 to 1998, Jackson said. EPA is working with the Department of Health and Human Services, which is making available a \$6 million grant to provide asbestos-related medical care to Libby and residents of Troy, another Montana town.

"Based on a rigorous re-evaluation of the situation on the ground, we will continue to move aggressively on the cleanup efforts and protect the health of the people," Jackson said. "We're here to help create a long and prosperous future for this town."

Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., called the emergency declaration a great day for Libby, which he said "had to wait year after year as the last administration failed to determine that a public health emergency exists."

"Today is the day that after years of work we were able to succeed in getting this done," Baucus said. "We will continue to push until Libby has a clean bill of health."

Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., called the declaration long-overdue.

"We still have a long way to do right by the folks in Libby. Working together with the Department of Health and Human Services and the Environmental Protection Agency, we're making very good progress," Tester said.